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COMTE AND MILL

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By

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'THE NEO-PLATONISTS,' 'THE LIBERAL STATE,' ETC.

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COMTE AND MILL

CHAPTER I

ANTECEDENTS

THE two thinkers who have been brought together as the subjects of this volume spring out of what is broadly the same movement of modern thought. If within it they are in some respects antithetic, this makes them all the better adapted for simultaneous treatment. Both, on the intellectual side, were adherents of the philosophy called in general experiential; and with both alike the whole effort of thought was inspired by a social aim. The difference is that by the younger of the two the experience regarded as the ground of knowledge was supposed to be explicable by impressions on the individual mind; whereas the elder had transcended 'individualism' in this sense, and conceived of knowledge as fundamentally a social product. For Mill, the individual human being is a component of society known prior to the composition. For Comte, he cannot be known as

human except in relation to it, and can only be thought of apart from it by abstraction.

This change of view is often said to characterise the advance made by the nineteenth century on the eighteenth. Because Mill had not appreciated this advance, it is sometimes said that he ought to be classed as still belonging in spirit to the eighteenth century. Comte, in this resembling Hegel in spite of his very different general philosophy, was one of those who had most unquestionably made the new point of view their own. At first sight therefore he might appear to have all the advantage over his younger contemporary. This impression, however, would be wrong. The whole value of a philosopher's thought cannot be tested by any single point of view; and there were lines on which Mill, though not so systematic and powerful a thinker all round, went deeper and achieved more than Comte

There is not space to say much of the biography of either; but the leading facts must be given. Auguste Comte was born at Montpellier on the 19th January 1798, and died at Paris on the 5th September 1857. John Stuart Mill was born at Pentonville on the 20th May 1806, and died at Avignon on the 8th May 1873. Comte's system-

atic training was in mathematical and physical science; first at the Lycée of Montpellier and afterwards at the École Polytechnique in Paris. In youth he also accumulated extensive knowledge of history and literature, and an extremely tenacious memory gave him ever afterwards full command of his material. Henceforth, however, he only elaborated and did not add to the store. His later abstinence from the reading of contemporary literature and journalism he described as 'cerebral hygiene.' The greater part of his life (1816 to 1851) was more or less absorbed by the private teaching of mathematics and by the duties of posts as public teacher and examiner. What he always regarded as his distinctive work had to be done in the intervals of obligatory tasks; till at length, having been deprived first of one post and then of another through the hostility of scientific specialists whom he had failed to conciliate either for his philosophy or for himself personally, he was supported, in further developing his doctrine, by the subsidies of disciples and sympathisers. In one respect Mill's external circumstances were similar. He too was never a teacher of philosophy, but had duties extrinsic to the purpose of his life as he had been led to conceive it from the first. A

severe and elaborate education by his father, James Mill (1773-1836), in ancient literature, in mathematics, and especially in logic, was followed by an official career in the service of the East India Company, which lasted from 1823 to 1858, when the government of India was transferred to the Crown. His education, it may be observed, was in a manner complementary to that of the Polytechnic student. Physical science was a study in which Mill was not directly trained, but in which he eagerly sought information for himself. For his actual work this was not the least important part of his preparation; as, similarly, Comte's historical reading was not the least important part of his.

To Comte the impulse towards the philosophic work of his life came at once from the thinkers who, before the French Revolution, had speculated with conscious regard to the better ordering of society, and from those who, after the Restoration, were aiming at social reconstruction either by a continuance of the revolutionary movement or by a return to the past. The names he has himself selected from his nearest precursors are those of Condorcet and of Joseph de Maistre. From the former he took the idea that the total movement of history is progressive; but, precisely as the

consequence of this idea, found him in detail of little value because, with the eighteenth century generally, he had nothing but condemnation for the Middle Ages. From the latter he took the vindication of the mediæval order and of its culmination in the papacy, but only, as he says, relatively to the stage then reached by the European mind. Condorcet had failed to recognise the 'relative' justification of the past. De Maistre, in accordance with the old theological philosophy, held its justification to be 'absolute.' A sound philosophy, emancipated equally from theological and anti-theological prejudices, and regarding every order relatively to its own conditions, and not as absolutely good or bad, will move towards a synthesis under which the provisional value of both views alike can be recognised. This synthesis, to which the most advanced minds are tending, is declared to be itself pre-eminently 'relative'; not merely because it too belongs only to one stage—though the final stage—of the human race, but also for reasons that we shall meet with later.

Comte's aim was thus to be a reformer of thought for the sake of action. This was also Mill's aim, directly impressed by his father, who preceded him as a thinker and worker for the

cause of political and social reform in England. A disciple of Jeremy Bentham, James Mill indoctrinated his son with the principles of utilitarian ethics and jurisprudence as they were understood in Bentham's school. To these he added a training in the English psychology of Association as developed especially by Hartley. The works of the Scottish school of Common Sense were also read, but with a view to their correction and development on Associationist principles. For the merely verbal explanation of cohesions of feeling in consciousness by 'mental faculties,' called Memory or Imagination or Reason, different for each kind of product, was to be substituted the explanation of them in common by laws of grouping or 'association of ideas,' yielding different results according to the nature of the elements associated and their degree of complication. This doctrine James Mill himself worked out, in his *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1829), to explain the appearance of necessity in mental judgments that present themselves as axioms. The psychological origin of this appearance, he tried to show, is the 'inseparable association' of mental states that have been constantly conjoined in past experience. From this theory there resulted, in the view he

passed on to his son, an almost unlimited power of education, by modifying the associations formed, to change men's modes of thinking and feeling. Associationist psychology was not a part of Bentham's own doctrine, but was added to it by his disciple. Again, though great in legislation, Bentham was found inadequate in pure politics. For a new starting-point Hobbes was recurred to; but, instead of absolute monarchy, representative democracy was held to be the best form of the State. This position was laid down in James Mill's article on 'Government,' contributed in 1820 to a supplement of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Beyond the theories of government and legislation, the social science chiefly studied was Political Economy. The most recent authorities here were Ricardo and Malthus. Ricardo was a personal friend of James Mill, who had first encouraged him to express his views in writing. By Malthus's 'law of population,' J. S. Mill's social theories were afterwards deeply influenced.

He and Comte started in effect equally clear of theology from boyhood. Comte indeed was brought up as a Catholic; but he was thrown at school (from his tenth year) into the intellectual atmosphere of post-revolutionary France; and he himself relates that at thirteen he had rejected

all historic religion, including theism. James Mill brought up his son in the conviction that 'concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known.' Christianity, he held with the school of Bentham in general, is not only false but pernicious, the God of orthodoxy being 'the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise.' By Bishop Butler he had been convinced that the attempt to argue from the natural order to a benevolent Creator breaks down, since the moral difficulties of the Christian revelation have their analogy in the ordinary course of nature. But, as J. S. Mill observes, during the period in which he grew up, opinion in England on religion was more compressed than it has been earlier or later. If the Utilitarians were not to throw away all chance of influence, they must observe a rule of strict reticence in public; though as a matter of fact their real opinions were well understood. Comte was more fortunately situated in this respect. Even under the restored monarchy he could speak as he liked in lectures as in writing; and he never left any doubt that he regarded every form of theology, including the Christian, as superseded, to use his own expression, for all minds at the level of their age.

CHAPTER II

COMTE'S FIRST PHASE

For a very short time Comte classed himself, along with others who aimed at continuing the work of the revolutionists against the reaction, simply as a political liberal. This youthful stage is just perceptible in his earliest correspondence; but it was not long before another side of his mind responded to the influences of the counter-revolution. As in the case of Hegel, personal circumstances had little or nothing to do with this. The conservative element in Hegel's mind is clearly marked in his first great work, written before he occupied any official position. So Comte, making the transition with more precocity from his early revolutionary enthusiasm, expressed to his friend Valat his sense of the relative justification of the party that was content if it could preserve order against anarchy. The revolutionary party, he found, had no con-

structive plan. The destructive work of the eighteenth century had now been sufficiently accomplished. A new synthesis must be thought out before any further direct action ought to be undertaken. When this was adequately developed, it would be found to supersede mere 'negativism,' or revolutionary liberalism and free thought, as well as the old theology, by a programme which the conservative party or its dictators, no longer fearing social dissolution, would see the wisdom of accepting at the hands of 'positive' thinkers.

In his quest of constructive ideas Comte thought at first that he had found what he desired in the social projects of Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), with whom he came into contact in 1818. Saint-Simon is a characteristic figure of the transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth. A noble of reforming aspirations, he had with varied success devoted himself to finance in order to acquire the means of procuring assistance in elaborating the schemes evolved in his fertile but theoretically untrained mind. Comte, with his encyclopædic training in the sciences, presented himself as exactly the assistant he required; and the connection between them lasted for seven years. From Saint-

Simon Comte undoubtedly first took up some of the phrases and modes of thought that were his own starting-points. Among these was, for example, the antithesis between 'organic' and 'critical' periods, the Middle Ages being regarded as organic and the eighteenth century as critical. The general name given by Saint-Simon to his conception of the new social order was 'industrialism.' Industrial capacity is to hold in modern life the place that military capacity held in the Middle Ages. The practical direction is now to pass from feudal nobles to industrial chiefs. In the new 'organic' period there will be a new 'spiritual power' corresponding to the mediæval Church. For the clergy will be substituted men of science, artists, and generally the theoretical as distinguished from the practical class. The spiritual power, however, is to be strictly subsidiary. The aim of society is 'production' in its industrial sense, and the practical chiefs are the supreme directors and judges. To them belongs the selection of the doctrines to be taught.

Comte for a time called himself a Saint-Simonian, and worked out the new ideas in papers of which he did not claim the authorship. One of these, dated 1820, and entitled 'Sommaire

appréciation de l'ensemble du passé moderne,' is reprinted in the series of 'opuscules' appended to the last volume of the *Système de Politique Positive*. Comte himself, in the preface to the 'opuscules,' notes two points in this as original: first, the separation of the destructive and reconstructive, or 'negative' and 'positive,' movements that have been the components of the 'Occidental revolution' since the eleventh century; and, secondly, the contrast drawn between France and England according as the 'central' or the 'local' power gained the predominance. The two antithetic movements, he concluded, have been everywhere simultaneous; but in France the old 'temporal power' was prepared for final supersession by a provisional predominance of the monarchy in alliance with the commons, while in England the commons allied with the aristocracy reduced the monarchy to a position subordinate to the latter. For the rest, this paper is not otherwise original, being in the main simply a glorification of the joint triumphs achieved or to be achieved by the spontaneous progress of science and industry. Comte had not yet seized his own problem.

The break between the master and the pupil came with the next paper, dated 1822, and now

entitled 'Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires pour réorganiser la société.' In that year only a few copies were distributed. The short treatise was not effectively published till 1824, when Saint-Simon repudiated Comte's distinctive views. It then bore the title 'Système de Politique Positive,' thus anticipating the title, as well as the ideas, of the later great 'Treatise on Sociology' now known by that name. The point of difference was that, according to Comte, the work of the theoretical class must come first and give the direction for the new social order; whereas, according to Saint-Simon, 'industrial capacity' is in the first line, and all else is to work for its advantage. Also, Saint-Simon found that Comte had not developed the 'sentimental and religious' part of his system. This will not seem surprising when we know that the name given to the religious doctrine was 'Neo-Christianity.' By his successors this was put forward as the consecration of the socialistic side of his teaching, which they carried further. For Saint-Simon, while his practical scheme is essentially a kind of benevolent capitalism, has a place among the precursors of socialism in so far as he proposes to abolish the inheritance and bequest of property, and to substitute a selection

of industrial aptitudes by the community or its chiefs. Here it would be easy to find relations with Comte's ideal polity; but Saint-Simon is admittedly incoherent, and his immense projects were never systematically worked out. Now the last thing of which Comte can be accused is incoherence. Even the mechanism of his system is all there to be criticised in detail. It was not strange, though it was regrettable, that he should afterwards repudiate any obligation to Saint-Simon. The connection, he declared at last, had only fettered the course of his spontaneous meditations.

The early *Politique Positive* is certainly an astonishing work. At the age of twenty-four, Comte appears already as a master, clearly in possession of the central ideas of his system. Here was originally formulated his 'law of the three states.' Of this his disciple Littré, who became a dissentient from his later doctrine, and thus fulfils the condition of impartiality, has failed to find any trace in Saint-Simon. As a separate thought it is anticipated in a passage he has brought to light from Turgot; but the idea, as he points out, was by Turgot left quite undeveloped. In Comte it is undoubtedly independent, and by him first it was made the basis

of sociology conceived as a positive science. The general idea is that the human mind first explains the course of nature by 'theological' fictions, in which objects are imagined to be moved by a quasi-human will; these are then reduced to depersonalised abstractions, or 'metaphysical' entities; finally, every attempt is renounced to go behind the 'positive' or scientific law of the successions and resemblances of phenomena. This formula having been arrived at historically, society itself becomes the subject-matter of a positive science. For the characteristic of social phenomena, in distinction from all others, is the peculiar kind of continuity that unites the historical past with the present and the future; and the formula of this is the law of the three states, now discovered. Social science, as it develops, will, like the other sciences (astronomy, for instance), be made the ground of prevision. The thinkers who work out this new science will be able to show that a certain type of social order is in the future inevitable, as the past stages have been in their time. Its advent can indeed be retarded by want of insight, but that is all. Nothing can prevent its final realisation. By showing this, the insight of theorists may cause many otherwise inevitable revolu-

tionary disturbances to be avoided on the way. The final movement, Comte holds, is towards supersession of a theologico-military by a scientific industrial order. The intermediate system, in which metaphysicians and jurists took the lead as respectively the theoretical and practical directors, is merely transitional. Men of science, when science has been systematised and unified under a positive conception, will form the spiritual power. The temporal power will be that of the industrial directors, by 'industry' being understood in general the action of man on nature. This will have taken the place of 'conquest,' or the effort to reduce other men to subserviency, which was the characteristic activity of militarism.

In the next 'opuscule,' entitled 'Considérations sur les sciences et les savants' (1825), Comte gives an outline of the classification of the sciences afterwards set forth by him in detail in the *Philosophie Positive*. The paper contains some further development of his views on the 'spiritual power,' but these are more explicitly stated in the 'Considérations sur le pouvoir spirituel' (1826). Here he definitely declares for the institution of a scientific or philosophical clergy, separate from the State, and corresponding

to the mediæval church. This, he maintains now as later, is the only cure for the temporary anarchy brought on by the division of labour and the dispersive specialism that accompany the generally beneficent march of a progressive movement. The theological base of the old 'organic' order as it stood having been irrevocably destroyed by criticism, the problem is to find for the new order a positive base that shall be indestructible by criticism because it is perfectly rational.

CHAPTER III

THE POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

The result of Comte's development so far was to turn him away for several years from schemes of direct social reconstruction. This he had decided, as against the Saint-Simonians, was premature, till a philosophy, itself scientific, had been founded on the positive sciences. He had already in his mind the scheme of such a new theoretical construction, and was able to draw up the plan of a 'Course of Positive Philosophy' in 1826. The 'fundamental work' in which it was embodied—the *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, in six volumes—occupied in actual publication the twelve years from 1830 to 1842. At the end of the last volume he declared himself at length ready to set to work on the elaboration of the social doctrine adumbrated in the early treatises. This he completed in the later *Système de Politique Positive*, which must be reserved for another chapter.

By 'positive philosophy' we are to understand a philosophy not only founded on the sciences, but in its whole substance consisting of their higher generalisations. The structure is thus homogeneous, but there is no thought of deducing all scientific laws from some single law or principle. Such a deduction is admitted to be impossible. Each science has methods and laws peculiar to itself. The abstract sciences form a hierarchy, beginning with Mathematics, which is fundamental as method and also as doctrine, being itself one of the sciences of phenomena. Beginning with Calculus (in the most general sense), it proceeds through Geometry to Rational Mechanics. Next come the sciences of inorganic nature—Astronomy, Terrestrial Physics, and Chemistry. Above these are the sciences of the organic group—Biology (ending with Cerebral Physiology) and Sociology. On these six abstract sciences depend the concrete and the applied sciences. Science, Comte recognises, is really one. The laws of its component sciences interact, and it grows as a whole. But, while it is divided only for convenience, the grouping adopted, he contends, is the natural one. That is to say, it has been discovered as something given, not invented and then imposed on the

facts. For the series of sciences is determined by a corresponding series of distinguishable phenomena, the more simple, general, and independent preceding the more complicated, special, and dependent. Social phenomena are at the extreme at once of dependence, speciality, and complexity. To deal with the first point, the relation may be traced all through. For social phenomena depend on the nature of the organisms comprising the society; the phenomena of organic life again depend on chemical and physical, and these on astronomical phenomena; and the conditions of investigating astronomical and physical phenomena are furnished by mathematics. This order of successive terms does not exhibit the whole dependence. The phenomena of society are further directly influenced by those investigated under the heads of chemistry, physics, and astronomy. To take the most remote from man: consider the difference that would be made to the human lot by some astronomically very slight change in the solar system. On the other hand, mathematics, directly applicable to astronomy, is somewhat less applicable to physics, and still less to chemistry; and when organic and social phenomena are reached it is almost without efficacy. The scale of the sciences from mathe-

matics onward, Comte observes, is the descending scale of perfection in the sense of quantitative exactitude; but perfection is not to be confounded with certainty. The less perfect sciences are no less certain, though they are less exact, than those that precede them. Since all phenomena without exception are capable of being brought under positive laws or formulæ, there can be, when the scale is complete, no difference as regards the positive character of the sciences. Sociology, once formed, will be as positive as mathematics.

The primary reason by which Comte determines his hierarchy is the relation of the several sciences to the 'law of the three states,' to which we must now return. The sciences, it appears historically, do not all pass simultaneously through the theological, metaphysical, and positive stages. Taken as wholes, those that deal with the simplest and most general phenomena are the first to become positive. The historical order is that of the scale given. The sciences of organic life, in Comte's view, had reached the positive stage only just before his own time. For him it remained to complete the hierarchy by making the science of society positive. This he was able to do by assigning a law of intellectual

development with which other social phenomena could be connected, for there is a consensus among all of them. It is enough for the present that one law has been determined. We have in this something quite distinctive of social phenomena. There is nothing even in organic life quite like the linking of each generation of mankind to those that preceded it by the preservation and successive modification of the products of thought. Hence results a unique method, altogether unlike the 'introspective' method of the psychologists. His historical law, he insists, has been determined, not by the necessarily illusory method of 'self-observation,' which is impossible because the observed and the observer are one, but by an examination of the results of man's mental processes as they lie before us in the actual system of objective knowledge.

The only method Comte recognised of investigating the individual mind, prior to social consideration of it, was an attempt, such as had been made in the phrenology of Gall, to connect the different regions of the brain with corresponding mental faculties. It is sufficiently remarkable that, with no more satisfactory position than this to start from, he determined the

mode of establishing generalisations in sociology which was adopted by Mill, who had long been in search of it, and confesses that without the aid of Comte he might never have arrived at it. The procedure is this. A law of historical development having been attained by empirical generalisation from experience, it is tested by trying whether it can be deduced from previously known laws of human nature: biological laws, they are called by Comte; by Mill, psychological. Comte, it must be observed, regards his law of the three states as also a law of the individual human mind, in which the historical stages of the general mind are recapitulated. How this is ascertained, or whether it is a happy illustration of the method, we need not discuss. Comte's 'historical method' itself stands secure. It has taken its place in Mill's logical doctrine as the 'inverse deductive method,' in distinction from the 'direct deductive method' characteristic of physics. In actual historical work of a generalising kind it may be seen constantly in use, and by Dr. Tylor it has been further developed as a method applicable in the special researches of anthropologists.

Comte himself carried his sociological theorising beyond the limits of recorded history. His

explanation of the origin of religion ascribes to primitive man a doctrine of universal animation, called by him 'fetishism.' At the beginning of the theological stage, men spontaneously regarded each particular thing exhibiting active powers as alive. It was thus at first the particular object that was deified. By a process of abstraction and generalisation, classes of objects were brought under the imaginary dominion of a separable deity. The stage of polytheism was thus reached. Further generalisation led to monotheism, the last phase of theology. Through all this process 'metaphysical' thought was already at work, reducing by its dissolvent criticism the potency of theological explanations. Finally, it has attenuated even theism to the point where it becomes superfluous. The God of the Deist is equivalent to the metaphysical abstraction Nature, and becomes merely a name that is allowed to furnish no element of detailed explanation, this being left to the growing sciences. When the sciences are mature, the 'causes' (more than phenomenal) of the theologian and the metaphysician are alike dismissed; and, as was said, nothing is left but a formulated law. Not till this mode of thinking has successively extended itself through the series of the

sciences, and prevailed in Sociology also, can the human mind be considered as having finally reached the positive state.

Already in the *Philosophie Positive* Comte has arrived at his conception of Humanity as the organic unity within which sociological law is manifested. This organism consists of men past, present, and future; excluding, however, from participation its anti-social elements, while, on the other hand, the useful domestic animals are associated with man in a subsidiary relation. Humanity is conceived as having a beginning and an end in time, though Comte does not speculate about origins. It tends as a whole to a final order, which will approach equilibrium but never actually reach it. After this closer and closer approximation to a fixed ideal, there will be an inevitable decadence as the earth ceases to be fit for human habitation, and the problem for man will then be to adapt himself with dignity to the descent. With this, however, sociology need not now concern itself: we are still in the movement of ascent, which is of more interest. The progressive movement with which we are specially concerned is that which has gone on continuously in the West from the period of Asiatic or Egyptian theocracy to the attainment

of the positive stage by the most advanced minds of contemporary Europe. To explain historical progress, Comte does not recur to theories about race or climate. These, indeed, are not excluded. They may, it is allowed, furnish minor explanations when the time comes to carry sociology into detail, but the progress now dealt with is held to be a necessary evolution of man as man, not due essentially to the character of some particular race or races. What is at present the most advanced part of humankind will afterwards extend its completed type to the whole, all men as such being capable of assimilating the progress at first achieved only by favoured societies or individuals.

With his law of intellectual evolution Comte seeks to connect a corresponding law of practical evolution. To the theological stage corresponds militarism. This first takes the form of aggressive warfare and systematic conquest. As theology passes into its last or monotheistic phase and becomes attenuated into metaphysics, defensive is substituted for offensive war. Then, as positivity grows, militarism is slowly superseded by industrialism. These, Comte maintains, are necessary phases of human progress, and their treatment belongs to abstract sociology;

but in the concrete we find the first realised in different degrees in Asia and Egypt and in classical antiquity, the second in the Middle Age of Western Europe, and the third in the outlines of a new positive order now appearing in the most advanced nations of the West.

By the Greek States, although their history belongs generally to the theologico-military phase of offensive warfare, this is not typically represented. Since no one State could subjugate the rest, the characteristic movement was checked on the side of activity, and the distinctive development of Greece became intellectual. The last result of this was to reduce polytheism to monotheism, and to prepare for the Catholic type; though Catholicism, in the account it gave of itself, traced its monotheism exclusively to its Jewish predecessors. The Romans successfully carried forward the system of conquest, in which the Greeks had failed; and the stage of offensive war culminated in the Roman Empire. The problem for this, and for the social groups into which it broke up, became henceforth defence. The Middle Ages represent the system of defensive warfare combined with a reduced form of theology. In this period, the greatest advance is the separation of the temporal and the spiritual

powers, confused both in the theocratic East and in classical antiquity. This advance was made only by the Catholic West. Byzantine Christianity and Islam—the rival form of reduced theology that shared in the division of the Roman world—alike retained the confusion. The Catholic synthesis reaches its typical form in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Ever since, it has been breaking up under the joint action of the critical or revolutionary 'metaphysics' and the growing positive sciences, now tending, along with the rising industrial system, to a definitive reconstruction of European life. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the decomposition was spontaneous, and was shared in by all the Western populations. After that it became systematic, first in Protestantism and then in Deism, and brought with it first the break of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and then the revolutionary crisis at the end of the eighteenth. This crisis can only be terminated when the positive, as distinguished from the negative, movement has furnished the elements of a new and final synthesis.

The practical or 'temporal' power of the positive age, dawning in the nineteenth century, will be that of industrial, and no longer of

military, chiefs. Its supreme 'spiritual' power will consist of philosophers who have undergone an encyclopædic training in the positive sciences, and are able to view them in their systematic unity. These positive philosophers will be properly a special class of scientific men set apart to deal with generalities, since the specialists in particular branches are clearly incompetent for the work of co-ordination. The highest social rank will be conceded to them, but they will have no material power. Thus they will take the place of the mediæval priesthood, which has furnished the ideal pattern of a theoretical class standing apart from practical life, but directing it through the consultative voice it has in affairs and, above all, by its system of education applied to all the other social classes and permeating them from youth with its dominant conceptions.

We can now see how Comte, in his 'fundamental work,' while moving away for a time from the social problem he had set himself to resolve, was preparing the ideas that were to be brought together in a more concentrated form in the *Politique Positive*. Naturally he found it difficult to understand on what ground disciples and admirers of the *Philosophy* could repudiate the

Polity, which was to him its necessary sequel. A partial understanding, however, is possible. The chapter of the *Philosophy* vindicating the progressive character of the Catholic Middle Age opens with some pages in which he sets forth a doctrine regarding the separation of the spiritual from the temporal power which Liberals like Grote and Mill might think themselves able to accept. The direct dominance of a theoretical class is there described as superficially plausible, since it places intelligence apparently at the summit, but as in reality the most fatally unprogressive of social orders. It renders ineffective the most powerful and original minds of theoretic type, for which an administrative hierarchy has no proper place. By the immediate connection of the theoretical class with practice, no room is left for speculative research undertaken without reference to material needs. Yet this detachment is of supreme importance for the progressive character of the practical arts themselves. The true form of a spiritual power is one in which the few eminent theoretical minds are protected by the State in freely doing their own work, but do not aim at any place in a governing corporation.

This is, of course, a very singular prelude to a

defence of the mediæval hierarchy, not simply as an institution adapted to its time, but as a model for the future. It may be compared with a paragraph in one of the early 'opuscules,' where the position of the Catholic clergy in the Middle Ages is declared to be analogous to that of the Greek philosophers in relation to the State as compared with the hierarchs of Asia. The presupposition, however, that European history has been continuously progressive, whence it followed that the Middle Ages must embody a progressive phase, was not peculiar to Comte. Mill was quite willing to accept the whole view so far as the past was concerned; and, in critical articles, commended to English readers the work of French historians by whom what he thought to be Protestant prejudice was controverted. The difference appeared when Comte fully recognised his own affinities, ceased to recur to merely fanciful combinations, and left no doubt that it was of the essence of his own spiritual power to be an authoritative corporation, which he no longer hesitated to treat as analogous to an Egyptian or Chaldean theocracy.

By way of comment it need only be remarked that Comte certainly did not in the end fulfil the condition of impartiality he at first laid down for

himself in rebuking the revolutionary hatred of the mediæval past. The antipathy he has expressed again and again for the 'critical' periods of Greece and modern Europe is quite equal to that of any Protestant or revolutionary Deist for the Middle Ages. This apparent necessity to hate the one type and love the other seems to indicate contrasts hard to deal with on any theory of continuous progress. And, indeed, it may be observed that there is a place in Comte's sociological doctrine for pathological phenomena and reversals of progressive movements, though he has given it little theoretical development.

CHAPTER IV

MILL'S LOGIC AND METAPHYSICS

In the preceding chapter I have dealt only with the generalities of the *Philosophie Positive*, as set forth at the beginning, and with the Sociology contained in the last three volumes. The intermediate part of the work contains the systematisation of the five preparatory sciences, Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Comte himself did not claim the knowledge of a specialist in any of these except mathematics, nor did he exaggerate the importance of his preliminary work. Perhaps afterwards, when those who had accepted it almost without qualification would follow him no further, he came to underrate it. It had a genuinely emancipating influence, especially in England, where it soon began to draw more attention than it had gained in France.

Among the most enthusiastic readers of the successive volumes was Mill, who in 1841 began a

correspondence with Comte which continued till 1846. At first Mill announced himself as a disciple, but he was a disciple who claimed the right to criticise, and thought to exercise as well as to receive influence. Later, what seemed to him the appallingly systematic character of Comte's mind, for which every principle was settled and every detail had the certainty of positive science, showed him that the kind of interchange he had hoped for was impossible. To Mill, as to early friends, Comte frankly declared that he had no use for criticism, except regarding the legitimacy of deductions. That any one who remained at the theological or at the metaphysical stage should not accept the new system was intelligible; but for a mind that had reached full positivity he did not see what attitude was possible but adhesion. At first, however, the correspondence was extremely cordial. Comte read with interest Mill's *System of Logic*, published in 1843, making for it an exception from his rule of not reading contemporary work. He found in it the most advanced position, next to his own, occupied by any European thinker; and this, he perceived, had been independently arrived at. It was Mill's generosity, he declared, that had led him to cite the *Philosophie Positive*

so frequently. The development of his thought would have been substantially the same without it.

This is true, as Mill showed himself aware later. Still, in the history of inductive logic Comte ranks as his immediate precursor, his remoter precursors being Bacon and Hume. His direct studies for his work had been mainly in actual science and in contemporary English writers of minor originality. As the essential problem, he fixed at last on the question: What constitutes scientific proof in the experimental investigation of nature? It is here that he himself came to see his distinctive strength as compared with that of Comte, who, he found, had never attained a just conception of the conditions of proof as distinguished from method. The problem of method had of course been specially raised by Bacon, who gave a first sketch of the procedure formulated by Mill in his 'canons of induction' as the ground for applying his test of truth. On the question of ultimate truth in science, which was Hume's special problem, Bacon was quite vague. Here Comte and Mill were equally clear in substance, and, by more serious occupation with the actual processes of science, had disentangled the idea of fixed law or order; which, while it had been put

forward by Hume, had received from him a sceptical colour. This, he said, is all that there seems to be in science; but, if our scholastic dogmatists are right, there ought to be something more. That the order was really positive or certain, Comte was assured by the applicability of mathematics to the things of nature. For the power of dealing with them by quantitative measurement implies positive law. With this insight he was content; and here he fell short of Mill. In the proper sense of the term—not in Comte's rather abusive sense—Mill was a metaphysician; that is to say, he was concerned, like Hume, with the first principles of knowledge or science. He could not be content till he had determined on what most general ground we are entitled to assert one fixed order and no other in each particular case.

We may see this even where Mill is thought to have failed. Take Comte's opening mathematical chapters. He starts with a discussion of the end of mathematical science, not indeed its practical end, but its end as pure theory. This he defines as 'indirect measurement.' Then he applies his immense analytic and synthetic power to determine and classify its methods. The problem, how we know mathematical propositions to be true, is

scarcely touched. Essentially he regards mathematics as a natural science of given phenomena. A problem like that raised by Kant does not exist for him. Mill, on the other hand, though not in close contact with Kant's thought, regards the question about the evidence of geometrical axioms as fundamental. Are they 'synthetic judgments *a priori*,' or are they generalisations from experience? His conclusion that they are generalisations from experience is not now accepted, at least in the form he gave to it; but he dealt with the problem.

Where Mill completely succeeded was in putting the logic of Induction on a firm basis. To begin with, he had been thoroughly trained in the scholastic logic and its Aristotelian original, and knew exactly what it could do and could not do. With a view partly to refuting the indiscriminate prejudice against it that had reigned in scientific quarters since the seventeenth century, and was only now beginning to give way, he first worked out the theory of Syllogism on lines of his own. Only when he had disposed of this did he go on to Induction, by which he was for a long time stopped. The question was, How can we get, from the result of a particular experiment, a general law which we know to be true? The

formal logicians had little to say on this. What they called 'perfect induction' was a barren summary of particulars already known, not a process leading to new knowledge. An impression was left that scientific induction—all of it formally 'imperfect'—is a kind of mystery, producing conviction no one can say how. This air of mystery Mill at length dissipated. Certain forms of experimental 'method,' he showed, yield a valid general conclusion because it can be seen that no conclusion but this is compatible with the axiom called the 'uniformity of nature.' The expression he chose for this uniformity was the 'law of causation,' which he stated as the proposition that every event has an 'invariable and unconditional antecedent,' which we call its cause. That is to say, there is some determinate phenomenon or group of phenomena, the existence of which being given, the phenomenon we call the effect will follow. His attempt to assign the ground of our belief in this law itself, like his theory of mathematical axioms, has not found permanent acceptance; but none the less his determination of the valid forms of inductive inference remains definitive. This does not mean that it was incapable of improvement, or even that he left it relatively as perfect as Aristotle left the

theory of syllogistic logic. Physical science has been going on ever since, and logicians formulate and justify its methods after they have been invented, not before. It is now generally admitted, for example, that Mill underrated the place of deduction from hypotheses in physical science. He had a theory of rational deduction that was in great part true, but he limited it too much to a tracing of the consequences of known generalisations from experience. There is more place than he cared to allow for conjecture as the starting-point of deduction—of course with a view to verification by facts. But, as far as the process of induction is concerned, the 'new organon' that Bacon had called for was at last created. Every induction was shown to imply at once some particular experience, and a deduction from the 'law of causation' assumed to be universal. There can be a system of scientific truths, because nature as seen in the relation of cause and effect is uniform.

With respect to the idea itself of 'cause,' Mill and Comte differ only in the form of expression. When Comte rejects the use of the word, and prefers to speak only of 'law,' he means to dismiss ontological causes, supposed realities behind phenomena that have intrinsic power or efficacy

to produce certain effects. Mill retains it because he thinks it is most properly regarded simply as a name for the phenomenal antecedents that 'invariably and unconditionally' precede their phenomenal consequents. The negative result of Hume's analysis is accepted, implicitly or explicitly, by both. We have no knowledge of any power in the cause to produce this effect rather than that, or of any tie between the cause and the effect. The laws of nature are phenomenal laws, not laws of 'things-in-themselves,' and our knowledge of them depends wholly on experience.

Nevertheless there is in Comte a negative dogmatism to which Mill did not commit himself, and which he did not hold as a belief. Comte has at bottom no doubt that a real world of mindless objectivity composes the sum of existence prior to the appearance of animal life. On the origin of life, as on the origin of man, he has no theory. His position is distinguished from materialism by the rejection, on principle, of every attempt to derive the higher from the lower. Thus he can take an essentially teleological view both of life and mind. A true providential order, he holds, has been introduced into the world by man. He has no objection to

the association of this doctrine historically with a teleological optimism like that of Leibniz. Yet, while he rejects the name of 'atheism' (with some asperity, as Mill remarks), the rejection means only that he has no interest in atheistic cosmogonies. His objection to them indeed is that they are in essence a kind of theology or metaphysics, seeking explanation where the human mind can find none. He would not even permit a speculative interest in the physical universe beyond the solar system, because nothing external to this can have any sufficiently direct bearing on the human lot. With the humanistic, as against an attempted cosmic, point of view, Mill had much sympathy; but he was more aware than Comte ever became that the limitations of objective science are narrower than those of the human mind.

Mill's metaphysical positions are to be found partly in the *Logic*, but chiefly in the *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865). This treatise was written, as he has himself explained, with an aim that was ultimately practical. He regarded the kind of philosophising rather vaguely called Intuitionism as the enemy of all reform, because its tendency was to treat mere customary associations of ideas, dis-

soluble by analysis, as 'necessary truths' known prior to experience. Of this philosophy Sir W. Hamilton (1788-1856) seemed to him the best and strongest representative; descending as he did from the Scottish school of Common Sense founded by Reid, but deriving some of his ideas from Kant, and generally impressive by the copiousness of his learning. To Kant and his successors, representing the latest phase of Continental Rationalism (as distinguished from English Experientialism), eclectic thinkers both in France and England had turned under the impression that this was somehow an antidote to the irreligious 'philosophy of the eighteenth century' descending from Locke. Hence arose hybrid philosophies like those of Cousin, of Whewell, of Hamilton himself, and of Hamilton's disciple Mansel. The relations to religion on both sides, if we take the complete historical series in England and on the Continent, are rather varied. Mill has noticed the paradox that in his time those who regarded the law of causation as an intuitive truth were understood to allow miracles, and those who derived it only from experience to reject them. The controversy that burst forth over the *Examination of Hamilton* (in which Mansel also was dealt with) may be

considered as having closed this particular phase of the opposing philosophies in England. Successors may be found both of the 'Intuitionists' and of Mill, but none would now class themselves precisely with either side.

Much of the *Examination of Hamilton* is constructive. In pure philosophy the most effective chapters are those in which Mill has restated and developed Berkeley's idealism as against the 'natural realism' or 'natural dualism' of the Common Sense school. According to this characteristic doctrine of Reid and Hamilton, consciousness has an immediate intuition of its object in contrast with itself. Matter and mind are directly known as antithetic realities. Against this, Mill worked out on psychological grounds a positive explanation of our belief in the external world, reducing what we come to know of matter wholly to phenomena and their relations. The grounds were furnished partly by Reid's successor, Thomas Brown, who had developed the Scottish philosophy in the direction of Associationism, and partly by Professor Bain, then rising as an original psychologist of the Associationist school. Having defined matter, in a phrase that has become famous, as 'permanent possibility of sensation,' Mill goes on to

investigate the nature of the psychological subject. This he finds more resistant to analysis than the object. If we call mind a 'series of feelings,' we must add that it is 'aware of itself as a series,' and this makes it something quite peculiar and not finally explicable. Thus he remains in the end nearer to Berkeley than to Hume (whose *Treatise* perhaps he had not read). Mind is for him ultimately more real than matter.

Against all attempts to establish 'necessary truths' on the mere deliverance of consciousness, he urges the law of 'inseparable association,' recurring here to his father's *Analysis*. He would like to reduce not only arithmetical and geometrical axioms, but the formal laws of thought, to generalisations from experience. Free-will, which Hamilton made the basis of morals, he declines to accept as a deliverance of consciousness; but puts forward a doctrine of his own which, while fundamentally deterministic, allows in each person a certain power to modify his own character if he has the desire. From ethical theism, as we can now see in the light of his later work, he is not averse. Indeed he shows himself rather anxious to prove, in opposition to sceptical theologians who would

ground theism itself on belief in revelation, that the idea of a God with moral attributes is not irrational. What he will have nothing to do with is an ontology of the Absolute, such as Hamilton and Mansel attempt to combine with personal theism and acceptance of revealed religion. At the point where an ontology of his own, differing from that of his antagonists, might have been expected, his idealistic theory breaks off. It serves merely to limit dogmatic affirmations, without suggesting any doctrine concerning the reality of the universe that goes beyond particular scientific hypotheses. In later chapters we shall see more in detail both his likeness and unlikeness here to Comte.

CHAPTER V

THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

BETWEEN the last volume of the *Philosophie Positive* and the first of the *Politique Positive* there took place what is sometimes regarded as a revolution in Comte's manner of thinking. In definitely returning from the laws of social development to a scheme of social reconstruction, he no longer called himself simply a philosopher, but came forward as the founder of a religion. This has been explained by thoroughgoing disciples as merely a change in expression. In his earlier works he spoke uniformly as if rejecting everything that was called religion, and made philosophy the highest name. But by 'religion,' it is said, he then meant only theology. Later he distinguished more exactly, and, while continuing to reject every theology, took religion instead of philosophy for the name of what is highest in his synthesis. This may serve as a

partial explanation; but there was also something unforeseen. The germinal ideas of the social reconstruction that afterwards took form are indeed present in the earlier works, but the organised 'cult of humanity' is new. The men of science or philosophers who constitute the revived 'spiritual power' are now not merely successors of the mediæval clergy, but are definitely clothed with sacerdotal attributes. The ideal for the future is theocracy minus theology. The sciences are conceived as co-ordinated finally in authorised text-books in a way that was hardly prefigured in the first outlines, where we were left to suppose special theoretical researches still going on in freedom side by side with the work of the class that is to co-ordinate them. And Comte at first had an apparently clearer sense that the work of co-ordination could not be done once for all by any one man. There is in him, after the completion of the *Philosophie Positive*, an undeniable 'exaltation,' as Littré called it.

The revolution, however, is more apparent than real. A well-known distinctive point in his later system, for example, is the supreme position assigned to the life of the affections. To this, in the ideal order, the intellectual life will be secondary, while practical activity comes third.

Mill, in his *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, traced this prescription for mankind in general to the circumstances of Comte's life. With his disposition to organise everything, he would have made the life of feeling supreme for all during the whole of life, because during the short period of his attachment to Madame Clotilde de Vaux (before her death in 1846) he himself had found full satisfaction in it. In an earlier correspondence, however (not published when Mill wrote), Comte had expressed precisely the same view. In fact, a biographical explanation no more applies than in the somewhat similar case of Mill himself, who has pointed out that his advocacy of equal social and political rights for both sexes was not originally due to the influence of his wife. His position that justice absolutely demands equality dated from his youth, when he had maintained it against his father's view, incidentally expressed, that democratic government does not strictly require that women should take part in electing representatives. The mental history of both philosophers, it may be observed, suggests something very like 'innate ideas.'

An occasion for bringing forward his new conceptions with practical effect seemed to offer itself to Comte in the Revolution of 1848. It was in

that year that he published his *Discours sur l'Ensemble du Positivisme*, afterwards incorporated in the first volume of the *Politique Positive*. From the chiefs of revolutions and reactions alike, however, nothing but discouragement was to come to him. We may completely assent to what his disciples say of his heroic persistence in his own course, now as during the rest of his life. At the same time, there came in more and more an element of illusion that was absent from his first period. The new religion, he predicted later, would have received official recognition in Europe at the end of a century from the Revolution of 1789. He himself, if he lived long enough, would be saluted as the High Priest of Humanity. But to say more on this is not worth while, even if there were space. The social reconstruction forms an imaginative synthesis not affected in its real interest by failure, actual or prospective, to realise itself in the expression that Comte gave to it.

His later doctrine is expounded in the *Système de Politique Positive* (4 vols., 1851-1854) and in the *Synthèse Subjective* (1856). The superiority, in some respects, of these works over the earlier ones is admitted even by Mill, who was least in sympathy with them. Their retrograde character

is seen chiefly in the growing antipathy, which Mill notes, to intellect as such. But, as an intellectual structure, they themselves rise above the earlier works, both in discrimination and in breadth of view, not to speak of the advance generally allowed as regards imagination and feeling. The superiority may be seen especially in the historical exposition; where it was less to be looked for, since Comte was more preoccupied than he had been formerly with 'order' as distinguished from 'progress,' with what he called 'social statics' as distinguished from 'dynamics.' The religious type of Western Asia is now far more clearly marked off than in the *Philosophy* from that of Greece and Rome. The highly organised theocracy of the first type is classed as distinctively industrial rather than military. Thus the term 'theologico-military,' as a general name for the old order, loses its typical value, though it is never quite discarded. 'Progressive' took the place of 'conservative' polytheism, Comte now finds, precisely through the superior position gained in the West by the military class. This was at most adumbrated in the 'fundamental work.' In the *Philosophy*, the 'revolutionary transition' essentially kept in view consisted only of the five modern centuries from the

end of the thirteenth. In the *Polity*, the analogy of the modern West to ancient Greece being more clearly seen, the break-up of the old order is found to occupy (with intermediate reactions) thirty centuries from the Homeric age. If the unfairness to the 'critical' periods has become intensified, the insight into their analogies has deepened. There is added further a remarkable speculation on prehistoric man. Before the typical theocracy, Comte places a kind of fetishistic Golden Age, in which man felt himself at one with nature, conceived as universally animated. An interesting suggestion is thrown out that it was at this stage that animals were first domesticated. Man, being then less removed from them in intelligence and sympathy, could put himself with more spontaneity in relation with them. The period of force and dominance came later. Had it been necessary to begin by violent subjugation, no taming could ever have been effected.

These, however, are relatively subordinate developments. Both in method and in doctrine, Comte's later phase is marked by one unquestionable advance of the highest scientific generality. At first Sociology was conceived by him as the supreme science. He held it to be dependent on

Biology as the next in order in the hierarchy. From Biology (or a special department of it) sociological laws must be deduced. He had seen, however, from the first, that Sociology is not wholly thus dependent. It has a method and a doctrine of its own: namely, the historical method and the law of the three states. But this brings into relief another aspect of the individual man. By the time he had completed the *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, Comte perceived the necessity of a revision, as he told Mill in their correspondence. Hitherto the individual had not been explicitly considered at all, except as a biological organism. This point of view he now perceived to be even more inadequate than he had thought. Individuality had seemed at first to be a mere biological notion, and then to be effaced under the conception of a social unity. From Comte's later point of view the individual person in the full sense can be restored as an object of science, not indeed as a unit that enters into society, but as determined by sociological laws. There is a true science of man as individual: but it is posterior, not prior, to Sociology. To this science Comte gave the name of Morality, making it the seventh in his hierarchy. Moral science being conceived as supreme, all below must be ordered from its

point of view. With this conception there naturally goes (according to his social scheme) the position that the philosophers or priests are, above all, to be moral teachers. Being the educators of the community, they will direct practice from the ethical point of view, to which all intellectual pursuits can now more definitely than ever be subordinated.

Theoretically, it must be noted that Comte's new science is properly not ethics, but psychology of the individual. For such a science, his insight into its true relation to sociology is undoubtedly of immense importance; but he failed to distinguish it from moral philosophy, which is not the same thing. Just as he does not discuss philosophically the criterion of scientific knowledge, but takes it for granted, so he does not discuss the criterion of action, but supposes it to emerge as a matter of course from his theoretical 'moral science.' He has, indeed, an ethical doctrine, but it is nowhere critically justified.

His ethical principle is Love or Altruism. The supreme precept of his morality is 'Live for others.' Sympathetic as well as selfish feelings, he finds, are in fact innate in man though they are weaker. In the stages of human history, in spite of this weakness, altruism slowly gets the

better of egoism. Taking the historical view as sufficient, and passing over 'critical' questions about the proof for the individual conscience, supposed autonomous, and claiming the right to give or refuse its assent according to the reason of the case, he goes straight to the practical social question. The principle granted, as he thinks it cannot but be, how is it to be brought to bear systematically on every action? His answer is, by a religion,—the Religion of Humanity. On Humanity as the highest form of life upon earth, the 'Great Being' of the planet, each person depends for all that he is and does. Humanity, we have seen, is an organism in a higher than the biological sense. Its continuity is that of history and not of merely organic life. It is a real providence, in distinction from the imaginary supra-mundane providence of the theologians. Thus it becomes for us the supreme object of devotion. Through the graduated unities of family first, then city or country, the individual rises to the conception of the highest real being known to him, having a life in the past and in the future that far transcends the mere present. Humanity, then, can become the object of a cult, of which the devotion to incarnate gods or goddesses was an adumbration. Of this cult the founder of the

religion proceeded to draw up the outlines and a considerable part of the details.

The new religion is the 'Religion of Humanity' not only in the sense that its practice issues in the service of man, but also in the sense that it is destined to become finally the religion of the human race. From its beginnings in the central people of Western Europe, where it is directly the heir of Catholic monotheism, it will spread over the rest of the world, aiding the populations that have remained polytheist or fetishist to rise to the stage of positivity without the painful theological and metaphysical transition that has been necessary in the historic past. Agreement having been arrived at intellectually, the religion will aim at the systematic cultivation of the sympathetic feelings by exciting emotions of love and gratitude. The cult, in the definitive order, will be both public and private. Woman as domestic goddess will be the object of the private cult. In its public form, the adoration of Humanity will be organised in a series of feasts dedicated to the constituent elements and stages of man's life impersonally conceived, the private cult being directed rather to personal objects. The well-known Positivist Calendar is intended only to prepare the way for this definitive form

of 'Sociolatry.' The months and weeks and days of the provisional calendar are dedicated to the great names, theoretical and practical, that stand for all the progressive movements from the 'initial Theocracy' to the modern 'Republic of the West,' consisting of the 'five advanced populations,' French, Italian, Spanish, British, and Germanic. The dating to be brought into use in substitution for the preceding era of Europe is in years of the 'great crisis,' the opening of the French Revolution in 1789 being taken as the beginning.

I do not propose here to give any account of the hierarchical order to be imposed on the society of the future. As a scheme to be adopted outright, few Positivists now accept it; though, if not taken too literally, others as well as Positivists may find in it suggestions of great value concerning the stages of an encyclopædic education and the practical ordering of life. I pass on to give a few points from Comte's last work, the *Synthèse Subjective*, which represents in some respects the highest stage of his thought.

No more than the rest of his later writings is it a reversal of his earlier doctrine. It is, as he maintained, a completion of it from the other term of the series. The stages in his hierarchy of the sciences he still holds to be

objectively given; but his view all along was that they lead up to man as the end. Everything, then, has to be gone over again from the human point of view when this has at last become positive. The sciences in general, objective though they be, were never supposed to be other than 'relative'; and this means finally that they are relative to man. That is to say, no 'objective synthesis' is attainable. The only possible synthesis is 'subjective.' This does not mean that it is merely individual. A subjective synthesis is attainable from the point of view of humanity and not merely of some particular thinker. But no synthesis is objectively universal. The objectivity that exists is only that of abstract science, and carries with it no knowledge of the whole.

This is, I think, a fair representation of Comte's thought. He did not live to work it out in full, but in the only volume published of what was to be a third series of writings (after the *Philosophy* and the *Polity*), he applied it to mathematics, always in his view the fundamental science both as regards method and doctrine. The most remarkable part of this volume is the opening section, in which the Religion of Humanity is extended to the universe—or at least to that

portion of it with which man is in effective relation—by what is confessedly poetic fiction. The 'fictions' of the theologians, according to Comte, were of course not deliberate. Primeval fetishism, the fundamental form of 'theology,' by which objects were endowed not only with will and feeling, but with intelligence, was a spontaneous belief. Like later theologies in their degree, it served the purpose of giving to human curiosity a sufficient stimulus till the formulation of positive laws could be substituted for the futile search after 'causes.' The positive philosopher, however, when the whole series of stages has been traversed, may deliberately restore in the contemplation of nature what he knows to be a purely subjective and human mode of thought. First, the birthplace and home of man may be endowed with sympathy and will for human good. An imaginative extension of this hypothesis makes the Earth the 'Great Fetish,' as Man is the 'Great Being.' Further, to abstract laws we may assign as their seat Space, which thus becomes the 'Great Medium,' imagined not indeed as actively volitional like the Earth, but as benevolent. Space, the Earth, and Man form the Positivist Trinity. The other planets of the solar system may be regarded in like manner as

animated, and the Sun and Moon especially may be made the subject of poetic personifications.

Unaware, probably, of the remarkable coincidences between these suggestions and the personifications in the last Act of *Prometheus Unbound*, Comte leaves them to the poets of the future. By Shelley, it is worth observing, not only these 'fictions,' which with the poet were of course no less fictions than with the philosopher, but many of Comte's distinctive theoretic ideas were anticipated. The glorified humanity of the future is conceived not in terms of 'atomic individualism,' but as the Great Being—Man, not men. To develop this further might seem to the reader fanciful; but the comparison was worth making in order to show how easily the general conception of a Religion of Humanity can be cleared of what is merely personal in it. And, indeed, Comte himself, in this last stage, is visibly getting beyond anything that may appear to us sectional in his choice of models. From the typical mediæval conception of the world, with its agency of external spirits acting on matter, nothing could be more remote.

CHAPTER VI

MILL'S POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND ETHICS

It has been mentioned that Mill derived from Comte the Inverse Deductive or Historical Method, which he finally came to regard as the only possible method for the more complex investigations in the science of society. This is set forth in the sixth book of the *Logic* ('On the Logic of the Moral Sciences'). At an earlier stage of his political thinking he had already received an impression from Comte, and had come under the influence of the Saint-Simonians, as may be seen in the letters to his friend Gustave d'Eichthal, who was a member of the group. The contact was one of those that contributed to modify his Benthamism, others being his relations with what may be called generally the counter-revolutionary movement in England. Here, as in France, recognition that errors had in fact been swept away was accompanied in many

educated minds by a disposition to find, mainly in the order that had been singled out as the object of revolutionary hate, something more noble and beautiful than that which seemed to be taking its place. The structure of Catholic feudalism and the mediæval Church attracted not only theological reactionaries, but some who, like Carlyle, saw that the old system of belief was irreparably destroyed. It is noteworthy that Hegel, for all his Prussian conservatism, never took this direction, but sought a true organic base, as against mere anarchism, not essentially in a Church at all, but in the classical or the modern national State. This, as an organic order, had not impressed any of the minds by which Mill was especially influenced. And, as he had never abandoned what Comte called the 'revolutionary metaphysics,' the effect of the new influences was not one of unqualified attraction. He was willing to find something impressive in the mediæval past that periods like the eighteenth century had lost, but the critical spirit remained alert. He found already in Comte's early *Politique Positive* an excess of system, and remarked on the special favour he shows to the Middle Ages as contrasted with his unfairness to classical antiquity. Mill himself might come to

be over-impressed later by the 'rehabilitation of the Middle Ages'; but the large part played by Greek studies in his early education gave him the superiority over Comte in actual knowledge concerning the other term of the contrast. To the Saint-Simonians, with their zeal for industrial 'production,' he insisted on the disadvantages that accompany the success in it in England, which they were disposed to envy. A profound egoism of tone, not merely in formed men of the world, but in young men, who in France and Germany are usually full of generous enthusiasm, is what he finds to result from the predominance of the life of commerce. With the aspirations of the Saint-Simonians to a new order of society, and even to a new religion, he was at the same time completely in sympathy, though already afraid of the sectarian spirit which would try to impress on entire communities a single direction to be fixed by the doctrine of a school.

Before the time of his correspondence with Comte, he had found himself obliged to give up the rigorous position of his father, set forth in the article on 'Government.' Macaulay's attack in the *Edinburgh Review* (1829) had convinced him that what he afterwards called the 'geometrical method' of direct deduction from principles of

human nature cannot give valid propositions applicable to the whole of a society. The purely experimental or 'chemical' method (as he called it later) of Macaulay is, however, equally invalid. Specific experience is here too complicated to permit the application of the inductive methods. The method has to be some kind of scientific deduction. With abstract Political Economy he had no special difficulty. If men are assumed to be actuated only by one class of motives—in this case, those that refer to wealth—then the problem is sufficiently simplified to be treated in the manner of a deductive science like astronomy or physics. Having reached conclusions hypothetically valid, we can correct them by restoring the data provisionally set aside. When, however, all the phenomena of a society are to be taken into account at once, the *consensus* of its elements deprives us of the resource furnished by this kind of abstraction. For the problem of method thus left over, he found the solution, as has been said, in Comte. With some reserves intended to conciliate English prejudice regarding Comte's use of the term 'theological,' he also accepted his doctrine expressed in the 'law of the three states.' Further than this it cannot be said that he ever proceeded in

Sociology as a science. The later developments of his own thought in its application to society were in Economics, in Politics considered as a practical art depending to some extent on philosophical principles, and in the theory of Ethics.

A project referred to in the correspondence with Comte, but not carried out, was a work on the science Mill called Ethology, or the formation of human character, regarded as derivative from Psychology, or the science of the elementary laws of mind. This, in Mill's view, would have been a step on the way to a scientific Sociology. The lines on which it was conceived were, however, 'individualistic' in the sense in which Comte was now fully aware of his own advance on individualism. Mill came to perceive that his scheme was, at least for the present, impracticable, and turned instead to the subject of Political Economy, with the development of which, up to the point it had reached, he was perfectly familiar. Here again there was a divergence from Comte, who, though not condemning outright Mill's project of a treatise on economics, in reality thought the abstract science of the economists of very slight value. He had already expressed himself to this effect. The separate treatment of the phenomena of wealth, in his

view, was the source of antithetic errors: industrial *laissez-faire* on the one side, and socialistic schemes for nationalising the instruments of production on the other. The only kind of social science that could henceforth give any true guidance was a science of social phenomena in their totality. Mill, however, seeing no clear light in this direction, and retaining his belief in economics within its own limits, now began his second great treatise, the *Principles of Political Economy*, which appeared in 1848. What gave the work its essential interest for him was the hope, by application of the new doctrines attained since Adam Smith by Ricardo and Malthus, to point the way to social reform. In particular, the doctrine of Malthus on population was applied by him to refute despairing views as to the future of the labouring classes. Population, it is true, by its unchecked increase tends to press on the means of subsistence, and thus to reduce the remuneration of the labourer to no more than will support life; but the standard of living can be raised, and the increase of population brought under control by prudence. All through, Mill showed himself anxious to mark the limitations of the economic view. If the laws of production of wealth are in the main

fixed, the laws of its distribution differ according to the customs and the social order of different societies, and a better order may be thought out than that which exists. The present distribution is so unjust that even a scheme of communistic equality would be preferable; and, if communism can be reconciled with the free play of individuality, this may be the ideal order to be realised in the future. Mill, however, will not resign individual freedom. He puts forward no scheme of his own that can be called properly socialistic. In spite of the new influences under which he had come, his work could in fact be regarded as a text-book of the 'classical' political economy, for which *laissez-faire* was the general rule admitting only of occasional exceptions.

Another point of difference between Mill and Comte related to the position and the mental qualities of women. On biological grounds, Comte argues that women are intellectually inferior to men. This Mill cannot admit. All actual differences are to be traced to circumstances, such as mode of education, opinion of society constantly impressed, and so forth. No legal or political difference ought to exist. This was afterwards the thesis maintained with passion in *The Subjection of Women* (1869). Mill came

to think later that in the correspondence he had made too many concessions. The deep cleft, however, between his view and Comte's is manifest. The weakness of his position controversially is on the biological side. He will hardly admit at any time, whether in discussing sex or race, that any mental difference whatever can be traceable to the organism. His strength is in the feeling that justice between the sexes, as in every other relation, implies a certain equality as its condition. Economic dependence legally enforced, for example, is incompatible with this. In commenting on the deification of women in the *Positive Polity* as the 'moral providence,' he remarks that Comte concedes to them everything except justice. Comte's view about the importance of the relative superiorities on each side had to some extent changed, but his practical inference as regards social institutions remained the same.

In the sphere of politics, each point in turn could be treated as a case of antithesis between the two thinkers. Mill's *Representative Government* (1861), for instance, takes up the problem of developing precisely that political system which Comte regarded not only as transitional but as already superseded. For Comte, the way to the

ideal order is henceforth through a series of dictatorships. Democracy as a permanent system is anarchical. Now Mill, while he was always a democrat, came to fear rather that the rule of the numerical majority would tend to suppress individual variation. Hence he shows himself eager to adopt any device that may be proposed for reducing this danger. Parliamentary institutions in general he accepts above all because of the educational value of voting and discussion for the individual citizen. A benevolent despotism, though not to be condemned in all times and places, since the historical relativity of institutions must be recognised, would not be the best form of government even if it were the most efficient. Whether the particular devices taken up by Mill are such as to promote the ends he had at heart is a disputed question; but events have not refuted either his own doctrine or that of the school from which he sprang, as far as their hopes lay in the development of a parliamentary as distinguished from a dictatorial system.

Mill's most famous contribution to the defence of individuality is of course the *Liberty* (1859). This is first of all a philosophical defence of freedom in the expression of opinion, especially

when opposed to popular orthodoxy. Here at last Mill was able to plead with effect, as he had long desired, for intellectual liberty against the silencing, by social intolerance, of open disbelief in Christianity. In an often-quoted passage where the defects of Christian as contrasted with the best pagan ethics are insisted on, he gave an illustration of the freedom he claimed. The persuasiveness and eloquence of the writing helped to win the cause, in England, of free thought and speech. Although some who agree in Mill's general conclusion do not find the proof as stringent as might be desired, none deny the effectiveness of the plea at the time; and the *Liberty* has taken classical rank with Milton's argument for unlicensed printing. To a logical persecutor, doubtless, neither the *Liberty* nor the *Areopagitica* would carry conviction; but both came at a time when the public mind was slowly becoming more sensitive to the interests of truth and justice; and the literary rather than technically philosophical clothing of the arguments did not tell against them.

What has perhaps been most commented on in the *Liberty* is the contention for limitations on the control exercised by society over the actions of the individual. Not merely freedom of

thought, but practical 'experiments in living,' ought, in Mill's view, to be encouraged as against the tendency, which he feared in modern civilisation and in political democracy, to an enforced uniformity. Here especially we see the thinker who had shown himself so sensitive in youth to the influences of the counter-revolution. Wordsworth and Coleridge, we must remember, were in reaction first against the European tyranny by which the Revolution was followed, and had cared much less about temporary anarchy. Again, through social interactions which it would take long to discuss, Mill's argument against pressing the coercion of public opinion too far has been taken up by later conservative thinkers. Hence this side of his thought, by enabling both parties to appeal to it, has indirectly helped to strengthen the authority of his name.

The principal statement of Mill's ethics is the *Utilitarianism*, which appeared first in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1861, and was separately published in 1863. While guarding himself against what he thinks the errors of Comte's teaching in so far as it overrides the claims of liberty and individuality, Mill here in effect adopts the Religion of Humanity. The supreme end of action

is human happiness, under which is included (as also by Comte) the happiness of other sentient beings in relation with man. Of the properly philosophical positions connected with acceptance of this as the end, Mill attempts such proof as he thinks them capable of. There is an express argument against the 'transcendentalist' view that justice is irreducible to utility (or conduciveness to happiness), and can only be derived from an immediate intuition of what is universally obligatory without reference to ends. The feeling for justice, like other moral sentiments, is found to have its origin in assignable circumstances of human history, and to acquire its peculiar character in the individual from the type of moral education that has been determined by those circumstances. In the case of the *Utilitarianism* as of the *Liberty*, those who are in general agreement with Mill's conclusions have not found his proofs in all respects satisfactory. What has been most frequently disputed from one side or the other is the modification attempted by him in Bentham's definition or description of happiness. For Bentham, happiness consists of pleasures quantitatively estimated, pains being deducted as negative. The net sum — the greatest possible happiness—is the end. Mill

(after Plato in the *Republic*) proposes to distinguish pleasures as also qualitatively higher or lower. Yet happiness is still regarded by him as a sum. Thus, as opponents have pointed out, all the apparent simplicity of Benthamism is destroyed, while its principle is not expressly abandoned. Indeed, Mill incidentally accepts the most rigorous Benthamic view in the admission that the end is to maximise the sum without reference to its distribution. An adherent of utilitarianism like Professor Bain holds therefore that it would have been better tactics if Mill had declined to commit himself to any but the broadest statement of the utilitarian position, which is not specially Benthamic. The only difference of quality, relative to ethics, that Bain can admit, is the difference between egoistic and altruistic feelings. This too is a departure from rigorous Benthamism. An obvious objection to Mill's use of the principle of 'inseparable association' to explain the origin of moral sentiments is that this seems to reduce them to illusions destructible by analysis. It is indeed paradoxical that Associationists, having shown how, for example, the love of money arises from association of means with the ends of action, till at last they come to be substituted for the ends them-

selves as the object of desire, should complacently argue that the regard for moral virtue is psychologically explicable in the same way. Mill is conscious of the difficulty, and in one place gives an answer by pointing out that love of virtue is so far natural to man as not to be dissolved by analysis when it has been acquired; but on the whole his hopes were so much in educability that he preferred to dwell on the power of teachers and legislators to produce by public or private education any type of character they choose. Since he wrote, ethical discussion has taken new forms through the entrance into the controversy of factors like 'evolution' and the 'social medium.' Practically innate moral sentiments, according to the Spencerian theory of evolution, have their source in the experience of the race, though the experience of the individual cannot wholly account for them. Again, from the Positivist or the Hegelian point of view, if man is a social being before he is properly man, the attempt to derive the profoundest moral sentiments from an explicit mental process in the individual is an inversion of the true order. All this, however, belongs to the psychology of ethics rather than to ethics proper. The rational problem of ends and criteria remains. Of this

the new factors furnish no ready-made solution; but only, like the Associationist psychology itself at an earlier stage, contribute materials for the ethical philosopher. It may be said of Mill that he was primarily a philosopher or logician rather than a psychologist, and in his time cleared the discussion of many irrelevancies.

CHAPTER VII

THE ESSAYS ON RELIGION

THE year 1873 saw the publication of Mill's *Autobiography*. In 1874 appeared the posthumous essays on 'Nature,' 'The Utility of Religion,' and 'Theism.' Of these the first two were composed during the period between 1850 and 1858, to which belongs also the composition of the *Liberty* and the *Utilitarianism*. The third was written much later, and had been very imperfectly revised. It was not the kind of work that had been expected either by Mill's friends or by his opponents; yet it is not really inconsistent with anything he had written elsewhere on religion.

While Mill is often classed as having the type of mind of the eighteenth century, the essay on Nature contains the strongest possible attack on a favourite abstraction of that period. Against every attempt to find moral guidance for man in nature unmodified by human agency, Mill

proclaims war. Natural forces act in ways that would be regarded as involving the highest degree of criminality in human agents. When we turn to man himself, we find that what is best in him is artificial, being the comparatively late product of culture. 'Nature's god' and the 'noble savage' are sophistic fancies. The only morally admissible theory of Creation, in view of the facts both of nature and of human history, is that the Principle of Good is limited by extraneous conditions; that not otherwise than by struggle with the powers of evil, and by gradual growth, could the moral order of civilised human life be attained.

The next essay starts from the discussion in the work entitled *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, by 'Philip Beauchamp' (1822). This is now known to have been written by George Grote, with assistance from the fragmentary manuscripts of Bentham. Its conclusions are completely hostile to the utility of theism, and, by implication, of Christianity. Mill thinks that it presses many parts of the argument too hard; and his own view allows some value historically to the 'supernatural sanction' as an aid to ethics. In the end, however, he points out the danger of

associating sound moral precepts with doctrines intellectually unsustainable, and for himself explicitly accepts the Religion of Humanity, not as an imperfect substitute for the supernatural religions, but as equal to them in their best manifestations and superior to them in any of their others.

The essay on Theism develops the thought expressed incidentally in the first essay, that, notwithstanding the spectacle presented by nature, a moral theory of creation is admissible on the hypothesis that the Deity is limited in power. The limitation, Mill adds, may also be in knowledge, and even in benevolence. Yet, if there are any grounds for the belief in such a creative God, this kind of theism may aid and fortify the purely human religion which, with or without supernatural sanctions, he cannot doubt is destined to be the Religion of the Future.

The grounds that Mill finds for this hypothesis are essentially those that have always furnished a basis for the design-argument. The eye appears to have been made for seeing, and the ear for hearing. The Darwinian theory, he recognises, cannot be disregarded as one possible explanation of the apparent adaptations of organisms to their conditions; yet it does not seem to him to be

more than plausible as a substitute for intelligent design. On the whole, a creative God working on matter is, he contends, still the theory for which, as a speculation, most can be said.

Matter is, of course, taken here in its common-sense meaning as something real and opposed to mind. Mill, however, could easily have adapted the argument to his own idealism. For the 'permanent possibilities of sensation' into which matter is resolved by him metaphysically are not to be supposed correspondent to nothing at all. They may signify some non-rational conditions of the manifestation of intelligence. As to the nature of these conditions, Mill does not speculate. All that is necessary for him is that they should be limiting conditions. His creative Deity is clearly not the Absolute. He may be the most powerful being in the universe, but he is not to be identified with the reality of the whole. Mill, as was noted before, does not regard his own idealism as a possible foundation for ontology. The only definite use he makes of it is to show that it leaves room for a belief in the natural immortality of the individual soul. That it does not directly prove immortality he allows. At the same time he points out that mind, according to idealism, has a higher degree of

reality than matter as phenomenally known. Thus it may, notwithstanding anything that is proved as to the impermanence of material combinations, survive the organism in association with which it has been temporarily manifested.

In theism, as distinguished from idealism, Mill finds very little to confirm the belief in immortality. The most that can be made out is that it permits the hope for a future state as a possibility. Generally his treatment here gives ground for the view that he would like to discover some residue of truth in the doctrines of 'natural theology,' though not for the inference that he felt any need of them himself. In pantheistic or evolutionary speculations it is clear that he felt no interest. Hence he remains in the end more in sympathy with the tenets common to Christian and non-Christian theists than Comte, the fictions of whose 'subjective synthesis' have a decided affinity with the monistic ontology which he nevertheless completely repudiated. And Comte, with all his admiration for the Catholic type of life, makes no such concession to the claim that there is anything unique in Christian ethics as is made by Mill in the section of his last essay which he devotes to 'Revelation.'

To whichever side our sympathies may incline,

both philosophers here give us less satisfaction than we have intellectually a right to expect, and point to something beyond themselves. Hypotheses or fictions may be permissible; but in philosophy we ought to have grounds for saying, as Plato did of his myths, that the meaning contained in them, though not any particular imagination we can clothe it with, is the truth of things. For a religion, Comte's dogmatic assertions, whether negative or positive, seem at any rate more satisfying than Mill's suspension of judgment. The Positivist 'subjective immortality,' or preservation in the memory of survivors, for example, is held out as a certainty. With Mill 'objective immortality' is indeed a possibility, as it was not for Comte; but its realisation is quite uncertain. Yet it is here rather than in relation to personal theism that his philosophical principles gave him tenable grounds for an attitude not wholly suspensory.

CHAPTER VIII

ASPECTS OF LATER THOUGHT

THE most genuinely philosophical advance made since Comte and Mill has consisted in a renewed effort to lay hold of the traditional speculative problems they had in different degrees set aside. While Mill was applying destructive dialectic to the conglomerate constructions of Hamilton and the attenuated Kantianism of Mansel, Herbert Spencer, with even less direct knowledge than Mill of German thought, was working out, from the very imperfect version of it before him, a metaphysical theory not wanting in universality. Taking the Absolute of Hamilton and Mansel seriously, and ignoring their Christian theism, he put forth as the prelude to a system of scientific philosophy the ontological doctrine that that which lies behind the phenomena accessible to science is a demonstrably positive but at the same time demonstrably unknowable

real Being. The unknowable is the object of what is permanent in the religious sentiment, of which the essence is the consciousness of an insoluble mystery. This was as far as Spencer carried metaphysics; but later thinkers, not acquiescing in his resignation of further search into reality as distinguished from appearance, have tried again, with or without aid from newer scientific ideas, to grasp the whole. Some of these attempts could easily be brought into relation with the ideas of Comte and Mill last discussed. An atheological doctrine of personal immortality, for example, though it was not Mill's actual belief, has some affinity with his metaphysical conclusion regarding consciousness. And for a doctrine of panpsychism Comte's 'fictions' might take the place of anticipatory Platonic myths.

To discuss this aspect of their thought is, however, to take both thinkers on their less characteristic side. The strength of both positively was in the ordering of scientific knowledge from general points of view, and its direction to rationalise the life of man. The difference that goes with this resemblance may perhaps best be put thus: that Comte was not more superior to Mill as a system-builder than

Mill was to Comte as a critic, the word 'critic' being taken in the widest sense. The observation of Professor Bain, though it may not have been made with Comte in view as the antithesis to Mill, seems here particularly apt. 'A multitude of small impressions may have the accumulated effect of a mighty whole.' Thus in a summary it is more difficult to do justice to Mill than to Comte. The essays, for example, collected in the four volumes of *Dissertations and Discussions*, which cannot well be brought into a short general view, would add more varied interest to the outline than Comte's subsidiary expositions of his system, such as the *Catéchisme Positiviste* or the *Appel aux Conservateurs*, to which reference has been similarly omitted.

But this is not all that there is to say. While Comte was essentially a systematiser, his system is at certain points demonstrably wrong, not merely from the imperfect knowledge of the time, but from the very nature of its exclusions. His doctrine is not in conception at the level of Platonism or Aristotelianism, failing as it does to give any adequate consideration to 'dialectic' or 'first philosophy.' Doubtless it will be found to have less permanent æsthetic value. On the other hand, if we refuse to be compelled to take

it or leave it as a whole, it remains profoundly suggestive both in relation to science and practice. The stimulative power that might seem to belong more naturally to the comparatively dispersive thinking of Mill, with his cultivated openness of mind, is now far more present in the rigorous dogmatism of the Positive Philosophy and Polity. Mill's miscellaneous work was for his own generation, and contributes little, directly or indirectly, to solve newer problems. To complete the antithesis, Mill, though he has left no system of philosophy, has done a single piece of work that marks a definitive step forward in human thought such as has not been taken by any of the great systematisers who appeared in his century. For Mill's Inductive Logic is unquestionably a 'new organon,' susceptible of common use by other minds. This cannot be said of Hegel's Logic. And Comte, to adopt the accurate distinction of his disciple Mr. Frederic Harrison, has indeed 'instituted,' but he has not 'constituted,' Sociology. All that is definitive in his treatment is the discovery of the 'historical method,' which merely contributes one chapter to Mill's *Logic*.

That neither Mill nor Comte was affected by the evolutionary biology which had been rising

into notice in Germany even before it received scientific proof from Darwin or speculative development from Spencer, does not seem important in relation to the special work of either. So far as the idea of organic development had a bearing on Comte's own work, he accepted it. 'Social evolution' is a phrase that he constantly employs, perhaps before any one else. And the rational problems that Mill attacked in his theory of knowledge and in his ethics are not really solved by bringing in the experience of the race to supplement that of the individual. The full acceptance of biological evolution by Spencer before the appearance of the *Origin of Species*, and his cosmical extension of the idea, did not enable him to get rid of the individualism that Comte had left behind from the beginning. Thus his Sociology is in some respects belated as compared with Comte's. His 'social organism' is thought of in biological terms, much like the 'body politic' of Hobbes. For, of course, the term 'individualism' is not used here in reference to a theory of government. The point is that Commonwealth, or the 'social organism,' whatever may be regarded as the ideal mode of its regulation, is conceived only as composite Man, and not also as in its social character a condition

prior to the existence of its component units as human 'individuals.' Comte, we have seen, had fully attained this latter conception. Here at least no fault can be found with him from the evolutionary side. No doubt it was inevitable that evolution should at first seem to overshadow everything else; but we can now see that to social and political science the distinctively evolutionary thinkers contributed less than either Comte or Mill. It is not in relation to their distinctive work, but where that reaches its limit, that we shall find an advance due to evolutionary thought.

The real scientific advance made by Spencer on Comte is the result not of his evolutionism, but of his studies in subjective psychology, and his consequent recognition that this, and not biology, immediately precedes the science of society. Prior to sociology, it has been allowed, the individual cannot be properly known; but there is a preliminary science of the more elementary laws of mind, worked out subjectively, which does for the sociologist what Comte erroneously attributed to cerebral physiology. That in psychological introspection the observed and the observer are identical is no doubt a paradox from the point of view of the objective

sciences; but introspection is not therefore illusory. Comte's own historical method is no less real because it cannot be applied in biology. The distinctiveness of his insight into the nature of history is undeniable; but he partially failed when he came to deal with the 'pre-history' that is the more special province of Spencer and the anthropologists. And his failure here was closely connected with his non-recognition of the introspective method. What he missed was precisely the 'animism' which, according to Tylor and Spencer, was started by primitive man in order to explain the peculiarities of that subjective consciousness which psychologists regard as the material of a positive science. In Comte's view, as we have seen, all the theologies can be explained by derivation from a primitive theory that objects themselves are animated. The gods of polytheism being the result of generalisation from resemblances between objects of the same class, a god who, since he is common to all, can no longer be localised, comes to be thought of as separable from any object whatsoever. Now it cannot be absolutely denied that the notion of a separable deity might arise in this fashion. And, if it did, subsequent generalisation would no doubt suffice to explain mono-

theism also. A more natural explanation of the separability of the god seems, however, to be furnished by primitive animism. The notion of a separable soul is first evolved as an explanation of the phenomena of life and mind in man himself, and then (according to Dr. Tylor's form of the 'ghost-theory') a similar soul is imaginatively projected into objects. The 'ghost-soul' (according to both Tylor and Spencer) is at first conceived as a shadowy semblance of the bodily form, and is supposed to go away and return because this hypothesis seems required by the alternations of personal consciousness and unconsciousness, the imagery with which the separable entity is clothed being supplied by reflexions, shadows, and other accompaniments of the tangible person. Thus what is primitive is 'animism,' or the notion of a population of separable spirits. From these, the separable deities are derivative, directly or indirectly. 'Fetishism,' or the notion that there is a soul in certain objects, is secondary; and the idea of universally animated matter is a generalisation out of man's reach at the earliest stage. Now this 'ghost-theory,' since it has been founded on careful collation of evidence about the beliefs of savages at all stages, does not seem likely to be displaced as a whole. Had Comte's

insight not been defective in pure psychology, it is probable that the hints of 'metaphysical' precursors like Hobbes would have suggested it to him. As it is, no shade of a suggestion of it, so far as I recollect, occurs in any of his writings.

Yet it must be allowed that there is a tendency of late to regard the strictest interpretation of the 'ghost-theory' as overstrained. The notion that the world of objects is itself animated, some modern theorists maintain, was directly suggested, apart from all ideas of ghosts, by the phenomena of moving things. To all things that are apparently active, life is directly ascribed by analogy with active persons. The case is, perhaps, one where combination of theories may be permissible. The ghost-theory undoubtedly, and perhaps even Comte's derivation of all later developments from fetishism, might with ingenuity be stretched to cover the facts; but we have no sound reason for attempting to work exclusively either with one or the other, if there is evidence, as there may be, of independent origins. The law called by Sir William Hamilton the 'law of parsimony,' as Mill pointed out, is not a law of nature, but only a methodological rule. We must not invent hypothetical causes where known

causes suffice to explain the phenomena; and, if we have to recur to hypotheses, we must not multiply hypothetical causes without necessity; but, when we know of more than one, or of many experienced causal processes, we need not dismiss a portion of them for the mere sake of simplifying our explanations. The processes of nature are frequently complex.

This was fully recognised by Comte, who was himself strongly opposed to the chimerical unifications that are not content with carrying scientific explanation into everything, but aim at the reduction of all laws to one. The excess of system here can be redressed by his own principles. It is not the result of too great a striving after speculative unity, but of a too absorbing desire to unify human life. Neither in Comte nor in Mill do we meet with the barren formulæ that seem to explain everything while actually explaining nothing. Indeed, the demand for precision and applicability becomes on one side a defect, as limiting the speculative outlook. Both are too exclusively humanist. Here is the real failing in their philosophy that might have been corrected by application of evolutionary theories with their appeal to 'cosmic emotion.' In Mill, as in Comte, there is a theoretical oppo-

sition of man to the cosmos which seems to make of him a kind of miracle in nature. Evolution in its larger aspects restores a wholeness that both were sometimes too willing to renounce.

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